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ABSTRACT

A workshop on participatory research was held at the University of Calgary on May 3, 1988, as the first step in a two-step process, of which the second step will be a national conference to be held in July, 1989. The overall purpose of the workshop was to draw researchers (80 participants) together to share in the planning of the major conference and to provide direction to that planning. A summary is provided of the presentations at the workshop's three panel discussions, which addressed the topics "imperatives for participation," "implications for classical research," and "principles of participation and Canadian international development work and development research." Questions resulting from the small-group discussions are also summarized. Recommendations that emerged included a strong consensus that documenting and reporting on case studies of the practice of participatory research should be central in the conference. Other recommendations concerned the conference format and participants. (KM)

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REPORT

ON

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'S

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WORKSHOP

By

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July, 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary report of a workshop on participatory research which was held at The University of Calgary on May 3, 1988. Included here are sections outlining the background, purpose and objectives, the participants, the workshop itself and the current activities of the workshop planning group.

BACKGROUND

The Research in Development subcommittee of The University of Calgary's Division of International Development began planning a workshop on participatory research in September, 1987.

The Division of International Development has set, as one of its goals, some illumination of the meaning of partnership in development. The significance of partnership for development research is implied by the developmental point of serving the interests of developing communities in ways which are recognizable and acceptable to them. Such research depends on community participation in order to fulfill its purpose.

The phrase "participatory research" was coined in the mid-1970's to refer to this emerging model for development work. While the phrase has gained increasing attention and interest from both academic and development communities, the antecedents, meaning and utility of participatory research have not been well documented or discussed outside of an active international adult education network.

The Planning Group recognized the complexity of this concept and its implications for development and research, and conceived a two-step process for approaching the topic. The workshop described here represents the first step in this process. The second step is a major national conference to be held in July of 1989 at The University of Calgary.

Prior to the workshop, the Planning Group's activities included; efforts to establish contact with interested individuals in Western

Canada, in Canada as a whole and within the international community; the generation of a mailing list which includes academics in each of the Prairie universities, in numerous other Canadian universities, in addition to individuals in India, the Philippines and Latin America; and finally, maintaining dialogue within The University of Calgary through workshops and seminars.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the May 3rd, 1988 workshop was to draw researchers together to share in the planning of a major conference on participatory research and development. Specifically, the objectives for the workshop were:

(1) to explore the meaning of participatory research,
(2) to increase awareness of participatory research,
(3) to facilitate networking and the identification and generation of resources,
(4) to explore the relationship between participatory research and the research and educational missions of post secondary institutions, and
(5) to provide direction to the planning for the major conference in 1989.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The workshop involved 80 participants including individuals from Nicaragua, Finland, Great Britain, the United States and virtually all Canadian regions.

Participants included people working within universities, community colleges, non-governmental organizations, the religious community, the native community, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

As evidence that interest in the workshop was exceedingly high it is useful to note that (1) the available spaces were filled some six weeks prior to the workshop, (2) the 15 individuals on the waiting list

were unfortunately excluded due to a lack of cancellations, and (3) that the Planning Group received several requests for participation from Africa which could not be accommodated because no funds were available to support travel to Canada.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The workshop comprised 3 panel presentations followed by small group sessions and a closing plenary.

Introductory comments and background information was provided by Dean Befus Ph.D., Professor of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, The University of Calgary, Chairman of the Planning Group. Paraphrasing some recent work by Beverly Cassara[1], Befus introduced the following description of participatory research: the democratic principle that groups through self-directed education, research and action utilize knowledge to transform their social realities.

I The first panel session addressed the topic "imperatives for participation" and was chaired by Morris Baskett, D.Phil., Professor of Continuing Education, The University of Calgary.

The first speaker was Budd Hall, Ph.D., Secretary General of the International Council for Adult Education. He introduced the concept of participatory research by reviewing its history and assumptions, drawing upon 15 years of experience in participatory research as a researcher and administrator. He commenced with a personal note:

> Together with Ted Jackson, Dian Marino of Canada, John Gaventa of the USA, Francisco Vio Grossi of Chile, Yusuf Kassam of Tanzania, Rajesh Tandon of India and others, I was involved in the founding of the international participatory research network in 1977. It was founded as part of the International Council for Adult Education.

[1] Beverly B. Cassara (1987), "The How and Why of Preparing Graduate Students to Carry out Participatory Research," Educational Considerations, Vol. 14, Nos. 2 & 3, pp. 39-42.

Hall spoke about 3 aspects of participatory research.

A. Ideological - theoretical. Here, the goal of theoretical construction is the establishment of a new popular hegemony that supports practice that empowers and transforms ourselves and our communities. That transformation needs to occur at 3 levels: economic, ideological and in terms of inter-subjectivity. "Our economic structures need to change so that more democratic sharing of wealth and services can take place. Our ideological frameworks need transforming so that genuine democracy can be supported through education, the media and the academic worlds. Our relationships with people, our inter-subjectivity needs to be transformed regarding relationships between women and men, as well as entrenched patterns of racism, and ageism." Hall drew upon the work of Gramsci, Habermas & Fals Borda.

B. Ideological - epistemological. Hall suggests there are many different ways of knowing and sketched four; a Third-world perspective, a feminist perspective, a Native perspective, and a worker's perspective. He concluded this section with these words:

> Participatory research posits two essential new ideas for the world of epistemology and social transformation: the incorporation of working class or popular sector women and men in the production of knowledge; and the inclusion of popular knowledge in our accepted concepts of science.
>
> Popular knowledge is the common sense by which we survive. It is folklore, superstition, women's intuition, and it belongs to oppressed people, working people as it has since time began. From the point of view of the Critical Theorists, popular knowledge is the means by which the working class has been able to resist total absorption into dominant ways of thinking. Resistance, the survival and sometimes flourishing of popular culture in the face of structural pressures to conform, is present in schools, in factories, in offices, in Pinochet's Chile, amongst pavement dwellers in Bombay, in university departments, in businesses and in families.

C. The political practice of participatory research. (Due to time limitations, Hall was unable to present this section during the

workshop. These notes are taken from his written text). Here he is concerned with method, noting there is no single method of participatory research. Rather, he suggests, "it is a set of principles, a way of interacting, and a contribution to social movements in general." He continued:

> In North America we have seen three strategies of participatory research in use generally: research by people where the object of the research is the reappropriation of knowledge; research by the people where the object of the research is the creation of people's science; and research where the objective is popular control over a research process where other people are carrying the technical aspects of the research. Obviously the methods have varied greatly depending on the situation.

In conclusion, Hall said that participatory research "has caught the imagination of a large number of activist researchers in scores of countries around the world, it is a valid site of struggle in the larger battles for the control of the world's minds and is making a difference in practical terms in the lives of some people in some places."

The second speaker was Luis Serra, Ph.D., Central American University, Managua, Nicaragua. He began by defining participatory research as "a social process which combines investigation, education and social action, based upon certain theoretical and political assumptions." He explained that participatory research "has been implicitly present in several endeavours directed by the Sandinista government, such as the Literacy Crusade, the popular forum on new education, the making of the Constitution and discussion on ethnic autonomy issues."

He continued:

> A provisional balance of these experiences shows positive results as far as popular participation, leadership training and solving immediate needs are concerned. On the other hand, one finds obstacles stemming from the social context -- war, economic crisis, ideological heritage -- as well as from the way the research is designed and conducted.
>
> The development of participatory research in Nicaragua has recently entered in a new phase with the creation of a national network and the acceptance of this method in different institutions and social

> projects. We have started to analyze and systematise our experiences in order to develop a methodology according to our own conditions and to the political guidelines of our revolution.
>
> A more profound development of participatory research in Nicaragua depends mainly on the resolution of the above mentioned global constraints. Furthermore, the debate on the validity of participatory research lies at the center of larger issues such as the relationship between leaders and masses, the articulation of economic and political change, the contradiction between centralised planning and local self-government, and the character of the transition towards socialism.

Serra concluded with a confident note about the potential of participatory research to facilitate "the revolutionary goals of participatory democracy and raising the people's standard of living."

Pamela Colorado, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Welfare, The University of Calgary, concluded this session with a discussion of the relationship between participatory research and the traditional science of indigenous peoples. She spoke of the need for a bicultural research model, recognizing both Indian science and Western science. She described Indian science as follows:

> Indian science, often understood through the tree, is holistic. Through spiritual processes, it synthesizes or gathers information from the mental, physical, social and cultural/historical realms. Like a tree, the roots of Native science go deep into the history, body and blood of the land. The tree collects, stores and exchanges energy. It breathes with the winds, which tumble and churn through greenery exquisitely fashioned to purify, codify and imprint life in successive concentric rings - the generations. Why and how the tree does this is a mystery but the Indian observes the tree to emulate, complement and understand his/her relationship to this beautiful, life-enhancing process.

Colorado expanded upon these notions and discussed the principles of Native science and its goals. With regard to methodology, she explained four dynamics that drive Native science; feelings, history as a tool, prayer as a medicine, and relations. She shared several practical insights into the art of interviewing and spoke of the protocol involved in approaching elders.

She argued that the need for Native science is clear from an intracultural perspective, "but what of the West?" she asked. She continued:

> Are there equally compelling reasons to suggest a link with, or to support the practice of Native science? According to many scholars, the answer is "yes". Beginning with Einstein's theory and moving to contemporary physicists including Bohm and Capra, Western science has been searching for a new paradigm. The old science can no longer contain the data it produces.

In the current search for new paradigms, she believes that scientists are beginning to recognize that Native people have a voice, and by extension, a way of knowing or science.

Colorado offered a number of suggestions about how participatory research might help bridge the gap between Indian and non-Indian sciences. If participatory research is collaborative, endogenous, heuristic and experiential, she suggested, then this implies an ability to accept the idea of Native science and a sensitivity to the process oriented, communally based indigenous methodology. Through joint research projects between equal partners, participatory research can act as a flow-through mechanism for scientific findings from both worlds. Furthermore, participatory research can accommodate Native scientific theory and practice as one of a number of multiple methods or approaches commonly used for triangulation of data. Through this recognition of Native science, she added, participatory research not only legitimizes the indigenous way of knowing for the Western Tradition, but also achieves its own goal of human development. In addition, the professional role in participatory research calls for knowledge and skill in human interaction, interpersonal dynamics and conflict resolution, as well as group development. Again, she argued, this complements Native scientific methodology and may facilitate inter-cultural understanding.

She had reservations as well and listed some problems of participatory research as an "intercultural integrator". For example, the word "participate" usually refers to a group of people, but she

wondered, what about the group of different parts of our senses of function within our mind? She asked: "To what extent is participatory research willing to participate in feeling, passion, and values?"

She concluded:

> Through strengthening Indian science and working together, Elders hope that we will once again help our young "Know What Life Is" and steer our families toward the "Good Life." The key to this approach can be summarized in one word - "NIYE", which is a gentle admonishment of love meaning "my child." It is an honour to be spoken to in this way and it is we, the concerned professional people, to whom the Elders are saying "NIYE", meaning be good to one another and work together on behalf of the children and the good way of life.

II The second panel session looked at "implications for classical research" and was chaired by Jacqueline Ismael, Ph.D., Professor of Social Welfare, The University of Calgary.

The first speaker was Cynthia Nelson, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, American University in Cairo, who described the integration of participatory research methods within an initially more conventional research project in rural Egypt. She told the story of how a village was encouraged and assisted along a process of critical enquiry into their depressed economic conditions. During the mid 1970's, initial enquiry took place during 18 months of listening to weekly Friday discussions after prayers by the men of the village. University researchers were introduced to the village after those months and an alliance worked out. A partnership was established whereby the researchers provided their expertise to the service of local development directed by local people. The result by the mid 1980's was a significant economic improvement created by the combination of financial aid from the U.S. plus the adoption of the "small is beautiful" concept articulated by Schumacher.

The second speaker was Mathew Zachariah, Ph.D., Professor of Education, The University of Calgary, who discussed the relationship

between the conventional conceptions of reliability and validity, and the practice of participatory research. Essentially, his was a plea for dialogue between participatory and positivist researchers. He claimed that both stood to loose if a common meeting ground was not found.

Zachariah started off by listing the main characteristics of participatory research (PR):

> It starts with an acknowledgement that ordinary folks - the masses - already possess some valuable and valid knowledge and that their knowledge must be a starting point for PR.
>
> When groups of people get together to conduct PR, they go through a phase of "problem-posing", i.e., (a) identifying a problem they, in common, feel strongly about and (b) exploring its obvious as well as underlying causes.
>
> Such exploration is not an isolated, individual phenomenon but a collective process; books and experts can, must and do contribute to the investigation but the members of the group learn, more often than not, to collectively seek and analyze their problem in their specific locality in the context of their history. This process leads - to use a Freirean term - to adult conscientization.
>
> By its very nature, PR's focus is on a few major related problems of poor people in a limited geographical area or at a particular time (e.g. tenant farmers) or with the specific problems of a particular group of poor people (e.g. women) in a larger but still limited area. PR is almost exclusively concerned with economic and social inequality and its consequences for poor people.
>
> PR's mission is to empower poor people, i.e., to develop in them confidence that they can confront injustice and, at the very least, reduce the level of their subjection to exploitation.
>
> PR disputes the view that research and action must remain as largely separate activities; reflection, research and action are parts of the same emancipatory process.
>
> PR's credo is that research must lead the poor to use one of the few weapons it can muster, namely, mobilization into a political community to become a counterveiling power to the elites in order to achieve social change at the local level which may or may not have "ripple effects" at regional, national and international levels.
>
> PR recognizes the value of the professional ("outside") researcher but insists that he or she must be a participant with the group in the research activity and be accountable to the group.

He then listed four assumptions of the positivist tradition:

> (1) the social sciences must, as much and as far as possible, emulate the concepts and methods of the sciences whose subject matter is for the most part the non-human world; (2) anything that is worth knowing exists in measurable form and improved, precise measurement will get us closer to truth; (3) the social sciences must aim to discover universal laws of human behaviour that transcend culture (i.e., history), and, (4) fact and value can be treated as discrete, dichotomous entities. Taken together, these assumptions hold up to us the constant hope and challenge to pursue, if not value-free research, at least research that consciously tries to be value-neutral. Such research, it is hoped, would enable us to <u>predict</u> events, not just analyze the past or the present.

He suggested that many participatory research criticisms of positivism are valid, but cautioned that there still was some value in positivism. He noted that both believe that the world is knowable. The positivist emphasis on skepticism remains useful and indeed, participatory research uses skepticism to criticize positivism. He added that the issue of validity and reliability can be addressed in an informed way in participatory research and that this would force other researches to take it seriously.

In Zachariah's words, "honest positivist and participatory researchers have much to teach and learn from each other since they are genuinely interested in finding out the way the world really works for which critical awareness and critical analysis are essential."

He concluded with a quote: "Relevance without rigour is no better than rigour without relevance".

III The third panel session examined principles of participation and Canadian international development work and development research, and was chaired by Merlin Brinkerhoff, Ph.D., Associate Vice-President, Research, The University of Calgary.

The first speaker was Ron Hughes, Ph.D., Canadian International Development Agency. He shared his personal feelings and perceptions of the growing awareness in CIDA about the value of the concept of participatory research as a guide for Canadian developmental efforts

abroad. He characterized current CIDA policy as follows: There is overriding concern to help people to help themselves; there is a new level of seriousness to consider people first, with emphasis on issues of access and equity; there is emphasis on the concept of partnership combined with questions about what is appropriate; and, there is enquiry about the suitability of participatory research as a concept that might embrace the establishment as well as the oppressed.

The second speaker was Richard McClure, Ph.D., International Development Research Centre, who outlined the importance of the concept of participatory research in the Centre. The Centre has reservations as well and is particularly concerned about being able to evaluate research with the participatory research label. He explained:

> Because of reporting schedules and other commitments pressing on researchers, the duration and flexibility of projects appears, on occasion, to be insufficient to allow for genuine participation in the research process. Likewise, while a project may be labelled as participatory research, it is not always clear precisely who the participants are, or what the nature of their participation is. Projects which include as participants government personnel, extension workers, and 'local people' are likely to blur the dynamics of power and the hierarchies of control which may hinder full participation. The documentation of results may also be problematic. Reports which indicate the major result of a project as being an increased understanding or critical awareness by research participants are not easily assessed by Division programme officers. The specificity of design and methodology, and the need for flexibility which characterize PR also tend to create difficulties of replicability and validity. Where PR is seen to lead to incremental actions, it is not always certain whether PR projects can effect policy or have significance for a wider social transformation. Finally, the Social Science Division has become increasingly aware of the need to distinguish between PR on the one hand and standard qualitative and ethnographic studies on the other.

At the same time, he identified some strengths in participatory research projects.

> First, in all such projects the issues of analysis tend to be of immediate concern to the research participants. Those who participate are capable of framing questions in the conceptual and linguistic 'vernacular' and they can recognize gaps and inconsistencies in information. In addition, they are more likely to respond to inquiries because they themselves have some sense of shared ownership in the research process. Second, as applied

research, these projects have a further advantage, in that the data generated through a participatory process tend to be more readily perceived as accurate by those in a position to act upon research findings, than information resulting from traditional studies. Third, because participants engage in focussed research activity, a positive attitude toward research and some level of data collection and analysis skills is generated and can enhance future research in these locales.

He concluded on a positive note and sees a bright future for participatory research.

After the three panel sessions, participants and resource people broke into seven small groups to discuss participatory research and make recommendations for the July 1989 conference. Each group included a facilitator as follows:

1. Participatory research and health development - Sheila Robinson, Ph.D.
2. Participatory research and the environment - Bert Einsiedel, Ph.D.
3. Participatory research and community development - James Draper, Ph.D.
4. Participatory research and indigenous science - Woodrow Morrison, J.D.
5. Participatory research and conventional research - Jim Frideres, Ph.D.
6. The participation of women in development - Barbara Spronk, Ph.D.
7. The ethics of participatory research - Mark Stange, MA.

After an hour's discussion, everyone reassembled and the facilitators reported the results. Highlights of the reports can be placed into question form. Indeed, the consensus was that there were many more questions about participatory research than answers.

* Do we have any standards about how to act?
* Who are the people?
* How do we define the dynamic between human and material parts of the environment?
* How are we training our youth to think about participatory research and positivism?
* What is our society doing to encourage critical thinking?
* How are development experts trained?
* Can we come to a common view of the environment?

* How can we orient graduate faculties to the presence of participatory research?
* What are the principles of CD and how do they relate to participatory research?
* Where does one go to be trained in participatory research?
* What are the historical origins of participatory research?
* Who are the poor?
* Is participatory research only for the poor?
* How does it work on a day-to-day basis?
* How are research and social action connected?
* How do different cultures come to knowledge?
* Is participatory research simply a tool for development?
* Do we have the right to attempt to change cultures?
* What is the relationship between participatory research and indigenous science?
* What does positivism mean?
* What is knowledge?
* Is participatory research a research strategy?
* What are the ethical concerns in participatory research?
* What is the interplay between class/culture/gender?
* What is the relationship between researcher and community?
* Is there a masculine paradigm of participatory research?

In addition to these questions, a number of statements were made.

* Local people are better informed about their environment than are outsiders.
* In dealing with environmental issues, start where the people are and emphasize the positive. Take a non-crisis approach and establish environmental enquiry as routine community business.
* Participatory research addresses problems of the poor and the oppressed.
* Participatory research is more concerned with ethical behaviour than positivism.
* Participation is culturally bound.

* Participatory research is a methodology for dealing with global issues.
* Participatory research examines the interface where cultures meet.
* There are different ways of doing participatory research.
* Feminist research is a type of participatory research.
* We too often assume homogeneity in communities.

Recommendations for the 1989 conference that emerged from the small groups include a strong consensus that documenting and reporting on case studies of the practice of participatory research should be central in the conference. Some questions about conference design were raised. Who should be invited, only the researchers or the people (the "subjects/objects") as well? How can we make it open and free? "Can we suspend the scientific process in part and interact as humans?" asked one participant. All groups called for better definition of participatory research and for more recognition of its cultural and political limitations. In addition, there was general recognition that more effort must be made to evaluate participatory research processes.

Other recommendations for the conference included the need for child care, the incorporation of more innovative workshop designs such as poster sessions or popular theatre and the merging of traditionally "ghetto-ized" topics (e.g. so called "women's issues") with other topic areas.

The workshop concluded with some comments by Mel Kerr, M.D., Director of the Division of International Development, The University of Calgary, who shared his own views about participatory research. He expressed his concern about the term itself, about the definition of development and about the concept of poverty. He regards development as a global process wherein we all are sharers. To him, participatory research means partnership in problem-solving for mutual development. He sees the July 1989 conference as an opportunity to demonstrate how we collaborate in our mutual development. To that end he added his hope to that of the workshop concensus that "real people" be encouraged to participate.

AFTERWARD

As a demonstration of the extensive and serious interest in participatory research it should be noted that 80 people participated in a conference symposium on participatory research at The University of Calgary, on May 4, 1988, and that 20 people joined the Planning Group for a working breakfast meeting at 7:00 a.m. on May 5, 1988. At present, the Planning Group has received letters from people in Finland, Great Britain, Belgium, Sierra Leone, Ghana, India and the United States expressing an active interest in contributing to the planning of, and making presentations to the 1989 conference.

While plans for the 1989 conference remain tentative at this time, the Planning Group's intentions for the conference include a focus on case studies of participatory research work. Attention will also be paid to the review of research which examines the nature, the ethical imperatives, the effectiveness and the implementation of participatory research. Our objectives in presenting this conference are to contribute to the formation of more national and international networks of researchers and development workers who are interested in the application of participatory research to development work. We hope that it will be possible to contribute to the literature of this field by publishing the proceedings of this conference, and, if it proves feasible, through the production of audio visual resources based on conference presentations.